

One Hand,



Jaide with her teammates from the Colorado Venom

Jaide, 15, was born without a right hand. But that hasn't kept her from becoming a champion.

BY SARAH JANE BRIAN

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VOCABULARY

accomplished: good at something, skilled

competitor: someone who takes part in a contest or game and tries to win

procedure: a step-by-step way of doing something

intensity: power

idol: someone who is looked up to and admired; a hero

Jaide Bucher (jayd BOO-kur), who lives in Northglenn, Colorado, plays softball year-round—there's nowhere she would rather be than out on the field with her teammates.

When Jaide was in ninth grade, she tried out for her high school's varsity softball team. She soon became the team's

starting catcher.

Now in 10th grade, Jaide is still on the varsity team and also plays on a travel team called the Colorado Venom. Last year, she helped the Venom win the state championship.

Jaide, a remarkably athlete, also lives every day with an extremely difficult challenge:

No Limits

"I love playing," says Jaide. "It's all I think about."

Jaide has only one hand, because she was born without part of her right arm below the elbow.

When people first see Jaide, some doubt that she could be a truly powerful **competitor**, but their doubts only motivate Jaide to work harder to succeed. "I like to prove people wrong," explains the teen.


Playing Her Way

When Jaide joined her first softball team at age 8, she couldn't play exactly like everybody else because she only had one hand, so she had to figure out her own unique way of doing certain things.

As a catcher, Jaide has to catch the ball and then throw it quickly to other players. First,

she catches the ball with her hand in her glove. "I pop the ball out of my glove, and I hold the ball against my chest," she explains. Then Jaide pulls off her glove, rolls the ball into her hand, and throws—a **procedure** that takes just a second or less.

Jaide has spent years diligently practicing this

A photograph of a family sitting on a dark leather couch. A young woman with long brown hair (Jaide) is in the center, smiling. To her right is a young boy (Brock) also smiling. Behind them is an older woman with glasses and blonde hair (Denise), smiling. A brown dog (Josie) is sitting between Jaide and Brock. The background is a plain wall.

“Throughout my life, my parents have never let me say, ‘I can’t do that.’ They always said, ‘You can try. There’s a way to do it, and you’ll figure it out.’”

—Jaide Bucher, 15

Jaide at home with her mom, Denise, her brother, Brock, and her dog Josie

process to make the movements perfect. Today, she asserts, “I feel like I can compete with pretty much any catcher at my level.”

Jaide has developed her own method of batting: She holds the bat with her left hand and supports it with her right arm. To hit the ball, she swings the bat forward with her left hand.

“I had to build up the strength in my left arm to hit with the same **intensity** as the other players,” says Jaide.

Once when Jaide got up to bat, the other team moved in close, believing that she wouldn’t hit the ball very far, but they were gravely mistaken: “I ripped a line drive right past them,” Jaide remembers.

Just Jaide

Coaches and teammates don’t behave any differently toward Jaide than they do toward other players. “They don’t think of me as ‘Jaide, the girl with one hand,’” she says happily. “They think of me as . . . just Jaide.”

Sometimes, however, people who aren’t familiar with Jaide whisper and stare when they see her. Jaide ignores this behavior, but it’s still unpleasant for her. “It’s not nice when someone’s talking about you because you’re different,” she says.

Sharing Her Story

In 2015, the Gatorade Company created a video about Jaide. Millions of people saw the

video and were inspired by her.

Making the video was an extraordinary experience for Jaide. While filming the video, she got to meet Jim Abbott, who was a Major League Baseball pitcher for 10 years. Like Jaide, Abbott was born with only one hand. “I got to play catch with him,” says Jaide. “That was crazy because he’s my **idol**. I can’t even believe it happened!”

Jaide and Abbott also discussed the challenges they’ve both faced and how they’ve dealt with difficulties.

Jaide has advice for other kids and teens facing their own challenges. “You can do it,” she declares. “You might have to work harder if you’re a little different, but that just shows how strong you are.” •